

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0117

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SF, OREP (BARTLETT, DEWEY F)

SUBJ: CODEL BARTLETT VISIT IN SOUTH AFRICA

REF: STATE 23443

1. SUMMARY: SENATOR BARTLETT AND AIDE RUTH MET WITH
MINISTERS OF DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND WITH UP AND
PRP OPPOSITION LEADERS AS WELL AS PRESSMEN DURING VISIT IN
CAPE TOWN FEBRUARY 4. SENATOR CHARACTERIZED OUTLOOK FOR
FNLA AND UNITA AS GRIM, BUT SAID SAVIMBI PREPARED TO
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CARRY ON GUERRILLA FIGHTING RATHER THAN "NEGOTIATE HIS

OWN DEATH AND THAT OF HIS FOLLOWERS" WITH MPLA. BARTLETT EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT APPARENT CREATION OF SOVIET ORIENTED, IF NOT DOMINATED, REGIME IN STRATEGIC SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRY. HE LAMENTED LACK OF CONSENSUS BETWEEN CONGRESS AND ADMINISTRATION NOT ONLY ON BASIC POLICY BUT ALSO DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION. SENATOR NOTED THAT RELUCTANCE TO BECOME IDENTIFIED WITH SAG APARTHEID POLICIES, AS WELL AS VIETNAM EXPERIENCE, HAD PLAYED SIGNIFICANT PART IN CONGRESSIONAL REFUSAL TO APPROVE CONTINUED ASSISTANCE IN ANGOLA. HE FEARED IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE TO PROVIDE DECISIVE SUPPORT FOR UNITA/FNLA EVEN IF CONGRESS WERE ABLE TO REACH SUCH A DECISION, WHICH HE DOUBTED. SOUTH AFRICANS ALL EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT US UNABLE TO RISE TO WHAT VIEWED HERE AS MAJOR SOVIET CHALLENGE. END SUMMARY.

2. SENATOR DEWEY BARTLETT AND AIDE FREDERICK RUTH SPENT DAY IN CAPE TOWN FEBRUARY 4. AFTER AN HOUR'S DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR AND MISSION OFFICERS, THEY MET WITH PROGRESSIVE REFORM PARTY LEADER COLIN EGLIN AT HIS OFFICE IN PARLIAMENT. IN ADDITION TO POINTS MENTIONED IN SUMMARY, SENATOR OUTLINED HIS VISIT IN 1975 TO SOMALIA, VIEWING SOVIET INSTALLATIONS THERE, AS MEANS OF DESCRIBING WHAT HE FORESAW FOR ANGOLA. WHILE SOVIETS AND CUBANS MIGHT GREATLY REDUCE NUMBERS IN ANGOLA, THEY WOULD RETAIN INFLUENCE AND PROBABLY BE ABLE TO OBTAIN USE OF SIGNIFICANT MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN THE FUTURE. MPLA CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER LARA HAD ASSURED SENATOR THAT CUBANS WOULD LEAVE, BUT SAID SOME TECHNICIANS WOULD STAY TO TRAIN ANGOLANS IN USE OF HEAVY EQUIPMENT NOW BEING MANNED BY CUBANS AND CZECHS. HAVING SEEN THE HUNDREDS OF TONS OF TANKS, SUPPLIES, 122MM ROCKET LAUNCHERS, AIRCRAFT AND SO FORTH BEING UNLOADED IN PORT OF LUANDA, SENATOR THOUGHT MPLA FORCES ONCE TRAINED WOULD BE MAJOR THREAT TO NEIGHBORS, EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMED MOST LIKELY TO HIM THAT MPLA WOULD TAKE SOME TIME IN CONSOLIDATION AND ORGANIZATION AFTER GAINING CONTROL OF MOST OF ANGOLA. SENATOR WAS NOT SURE THAT MPLA WOULD THINK IT WORTHWHILE TO UNDERTAKE LARGE MILITARY PUSH RIGHT DOWN TO BORDERS OF SOUTH WEST AFRICA IN NEAR FUTURE.

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EM EGLIN PROBED INDIRECTLY IN EFFORT TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER SAG INTERVENTION BEGINNING IN AUGUST MIGHT NOT HAVE PROVOKED SOVIET AND CUBAN RESPONSE RATHER THAN VICE VERSA. SENATOR SAID THAT WHILE ENTRY SAG FORCES NO DOUBT BROUGHT ABOUT ESCALATION IN LEVEL OF SOVIET AND CUBAN SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION, BOTH HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN ANGOLA EARLIER, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAD LEARNED FROM HOLDEN ROBERTO AND SAVIMBI AT LUNCH IN KINSHASA FEB 3. THEY TOLD HIM THAT A

DEFINITE CHANGE IN ENGAGEMENT TACTICS HAD BEEN EVIDENT AS EARLY AS JULY, INDICATING THE PRESENCE IF NOT SUPPORT OF FOREIGN ELEMENTS. EGLIN THOUGHT SAG INTERVENTION HAD BEEN GROSS ERROR WITHOUT ANY VISIBLE BENEFIT. SOUTH AFRICANS HAD BEEN GREATLY DISAPPOINTED AT FAILURE OF US TO ACT DECISIVELY IN FACE OF OBVIOUS MAJOR COMMUNIST CHALLENGE, AND US HAD LOST CREDENCE THROUGHOUT AFRICA AS CONSEQUENCE. EGLIN THOUGHT THAT GIVEN PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IT MIGHT IN THE LONG RUN BE LESS COSTLY TO SIT BACK, ALLOW MPLA TO CONSOLIDATE GRIP HOWEVER MUCH SAG MIGHT PREFER SAVIMBI, AND THEN TRY TO DEAL WITH NEW GOVERNMENT WHILE PREPARING TO DEFEND SOUTH AFRICAN BORDERS IF NO SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS WERE POSSIBLE. EGLIN THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FURTHER TRAGIC ERROR IF US WERE TO CONTINUE NOW TO PROVIDE HALF-HEARTED SUPPORT FOR GUERRILLA FIGHTING AGAINST GOVERNMENT INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED BY AFRICANS AS BOUND TO CONTROL ANGOLA.

4. AT LUNCH WITH UNITED PARTY LEADER SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAF AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN JAPIE BASSON, BOTH INDICATED STRONG DISAPPOINTMENT AT LACK OF DECISIVE US ACTION TO HALT SOVIETS IN ANGOLA. THEY NOTED GENERAL BELIEF THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD GONE INTO ANGOLA WITH SOME UNDERSTANDING THAT US INTENDED TO PUT UP STRONG RESISTANCE TO SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERVENTION. WHEN THIS DID NOT MATERIALIZE, DEEP DISILLUSIONMENT SET IN. GRAAF SAID HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED ON ANGOLA SITUATION BY GOVERNMENT AND THAT WHILE HE COULD NOT SAY POSITIVELY THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME KIND OF DEAL BETWEEN US AND SOUTH AFRICA, HE FELT SURE THERE MUST HAVE BEEN. SOUTH AFRICA HAD NOW TO MEET THE GROWING MILITARY AS WELL AS ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN KNOWLEDGE THAT WEST WOULD PROBABLY STAND ON SIDELINES, WHATEVER OCCURRED. AMBASSADOR MADE CLEAR TO BASSON THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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SAG INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA WAS ITS OWN DECISION WHICH HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED WITH USG AND THERE WAS NO DEAL. BASSON GAVE SENATOR EXCELLENT BRIEFING ON SCOPE OF APARTHEID WHICH SENATOR FOUND PARTICULARLY INTERESTING. SENATOR TOLD AMBASSADOR HE HAD NO IDEA THAT APARTHEID SO INSTITUTIONALIZED AND ALL-INCLUSIVE.

5. CONVERSATIONS WITH MID DEF ANF FON MIN REFLECTED SAME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT USG HAD NOT ACTED FIRMLY TO BLOC SOVIET THRUST INTO SOUTHERN AFRICA. SENATOR PROBED FOR WHAT THEY THOUGH WOULD HAPPEN IN ANGOLA AND IMPACT ON NEIGHBORING STATES INCLUDING SWA. BOTH OFFICIALS PESSIMISTIC THAT SAVIMBI COULD HOLD OUT FOR LONG. THEY ADMIRER HIM AS A LEADER AND THROUGHT HE WOULD WAGE GUERRILLA STRUGGLE FOR A WHILE BUT DOUBTED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY EFFECTIVE. DESPITE

DISCOURAGING PROSPECTS, THEY ADVOCATED CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR SAVIMBI AS LONG AS HE WAS ABLE TO MOUNT EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN. BOTH OFFICIALS DECLINED MAKING PREDICTION ABOUT IMPACT OF AN MPLA-DOMINATED ANGOLA ON NEIGHBOORS BEYOND NOTING WEAKNESSES IN ZAIRE AND ZAMBIA WHICH SOVIETS MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO EXPLOIT. IN RHODESIA THEY SAID IT WAS HARD TO ASSESS WHETHER MPLA SUCCESS IN ANGOLA IS LIKELY TO SERVE AS INCENTIVE OR DISINCENTIVE FOR SMITH TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH NKOMO.

6. THE TWO MINISTERS STRESSED SA'S DETERMINATION TO DEFEND ITS TERRITORY AND BORDERS. THEY ACKNOWLEDGED CONTINUED PRESENCE OF SA TROOPS IN CUNENA AREA BUT MADE NO ATTEMPT TO SPELL OUT THIS PRESENCE AS BOTHA HAD DONE EARLIER WITH WASHINGTON POST-NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT BERNARD NOSSITER (NOSSITER STORY NOT PUBLISHED HERE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW AND SENATOR DID NOT RAISE ISSUES IT POSES). MINISTERS TALKED ABOUT DETERMINATION TO RESIST CUBAN-MPLA THREAT ALONG BORDER BUT REFUSED TO BE PINNED DOWN ON WHETHER THIS MEANT DEFENSE OF CALUQUE-CENENE COMPLEX OR ONLY INCURSIONS ACROSS SWA FRONTIER. BOTHA, AND TO LESSER EXTENT MULER, MADE SPECIAL POINT OF BRINGING UP REFUGEE PROBLEM WHICH THEY ANTICIPATED WOULD BECOME MUCH MORE ACUTE AS CUBAN-MPLA FORCES MOVE SOUTH. BOTHA SAID REFUGEES NOW TOTALLED 5-6 THOUSAND. SAG HAD SPEND 4 MILLION RAND SO FAR
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ON RELIEF EFFORTS.

7. IN RESPONSE TO SENATOR'S QUESTION WHAT THE USG COULD DO AT THIS STAGE, BOTH MINISTERS WERE ELUSIVE IN THEIR REPLIES ELLIPTICALLY SUGGESTING THAT THE OPPORTUNITY HAD BEEN LOST IN ANGOLA AND US SHOULD NOT HELP THOSE WHO MUST DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES INCLUDING SOUTH AFRICA.
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